

# From Monogamy to Polygyny: A Way Through



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Published by



**DARUSSALAM**  
GLOBAL LEADER IN ISLAMIC BOOKS

Riyadh, Jeddah, Sharjah, Lahore  
London, Houston, New York



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First Edition: April 2003

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## Acknowledgements

All praise is due to Allāh, the Most High, and the Most Merciful. We thank Allāh for allowing us to complete this book and giving us the time, dedication, resources, and intellect to do so. We thank Allāh for His guidance and His answers to our many inquiries regarding the content of this book. We thank Allāh for giving us this opportunity and allowing us to possibly be a part of the healing of Muslim women. And most of all, we thank Allāh for making this effort and to continue to guide us and show us the correct way.



Bismillāhīr-Rahmānīr-Raḥeem

In the Name of Allāh,  
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

We would like to give warm heartfelt thanks to those sisters who were involved in the polygyny support group. Through them we were inspired many times over.

We would also like to thank the sisters who reviewed and acquired the manuscript of our first draft and gave us their comments, suggestions, and feelings. And thanks must be given to the students who reviewed this book and made corrections and comments.

Finally, special thanks must go to our husbands for their continued support. We also thank them for allowing us the freedom and space to complete this book without hindering the creative process. We ask that Allāh increase them in this and the next and make them of the people of the right



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hand and keep them from the punishment of the grave and the punishment of *Jahannum* (Hellfire).

The most thanks and praises are for Allâh alone and we testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allâh and that Muhammad is His last Messenger.

## Introduction

Indeed all praise is due to Allâh, we praise Him and we seek His help and His forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allâh from the evil of ourselves and the evil of our actions. Whomsoever Allâh guides, no one can misguide him; and whomsoever He does not guide, no one can guide him. We testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allâh, and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.

*To proceed:*

Although there have been a few books on polygyny in the English language, these books have dealt primarily with the rules and regulations of the practice. However, our aim in this book is not to explain or delve into such. Though we have briefly touched on some of the rulings, the main purpose of this book is to enable and empower Muslim women to seek the most correct way of thinking and feeling about polygyny. With this book we believe that the scope is tremendous and different in that there is no other literature available in the English language that is similar.

This book was born out of what we saw as a necessity to help and advise women experiencing polygyny, in a loving but truthful manner. It is very common to see this matter discussed with one of two extremes. One extreme being that polygyny is loved and anyone who doesn't love it is an impious, neglectful woman; and the other extreme being

We advice every man and woman to read this book and get benefited from the problem-solving approach presented in it.

Abdul-Malik Mujahid

General Manager Darussalam  
Section I

From  
Monogamy  
to  
Polygyny

## Polygyny in Islam

Throughout the Muslim world misunderstandings, misconceptions, and denial reign supreme on polygyny in Islam. Men and women have latched on to the *Kuffar* standard of marriage and turn away from the practice of polygyny deeming it distasteful. To help in the justification of this subtle and sometimes blatant rejection, stipulations have been appended to the Qur'ân and the Sunnah which have no real or true value. So the question becomes, "What is the correct Islamic position on polygyny?"

## Polygyny or Polygamy?

To begin with, the word *polygamy* is often used to refer to the practice of Muslim men having more than one wife. *Polygamy* can be used to describe this practice, but *polygamy* also includes the action of women taking more than one husband. The proper word to use is *polygyny*.<sup>[1]</sup> It means the taking of more than one wife.

## Permissibility

The permissibility of polygyny in Islam is clearly stated in the Qur'ân:

"Marry of the women that please you; two, three or four."<sup>[2]</sup>

[1] The Arabic term for polygyny is *Ta'addud*.

[2] *Surat An-Nisa'* (4):3.



Allâh *Subhanahu wa Ta'ala* (Glorified and Exalted is He), Who is the Most Wise and All-Aware, is more knowledgeable about the human beings that He created, than they are about themselves. The laws of Islam are fashioned with that knowledge and are perfectly suited to human nature. Allâh has ordained that a man is allowed to marry women as long as he does not marry more than four women. However, this allowance is conditional upon a man dealing justly among his wives, from the known justice specified by the Islamic law, which includes overnight stays and financial spending. If he does not have the ability and capacity to deal justly, then he should suffice with one.

Allâh continues in the same Verse:

"But if you feel that you shall not be able to deal justly, then only one or what your right hand possesses. That would be more suitable to prevent you from doing injustice."

The permissibility is a simple and uncomplicated matter. Additional stipulations and conditions are added to the permissibility of polygyny due to the desires of mankind. For example, some say that it is only allowable to marry widows as consecutive wives. There is no evidence to suggest such a limitation, and on the contrary, the Prophet Muhammad's marriage to Aishah bint Abu Bakr ؓ, a young virgin as a consecutive wife, is a clear example to refute such claims.

To solidify the matter further, the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad ؐ illustrates the practice of polygyny. He was married to nine wives during the same period of time. This extra number was of course a privilege that Allâh gave to him alone. Allâh said in the Qur'ân:

"O Prophet, indeed We have made lawful for you your wives to whom you have given their due compensation and those your right hand possesses from what Allâh has returned to you (of captives) and the daughters of your paternal aunts and the daughters of your maternal uncles and the daughters of your maternal aunts who emigrated with you and a believing woman if she gives herself to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to marry her; this is (only) for you, excluding the (other) believers."<sup>[1]</sup>

Monogyny is also a Sunnah of the Prophet ؐ as he was married to Khadijah bint Khuwailid ؓ for 25 years and did not remarry until after her death. However, the Prophet Muhammad's practice of polygyny does make it clear that in Islam polygyny is permissible. Although polygyny is not considered an obligation upon men it is a Sunnah act, that if practiced according to the Sunnah can be the source of much reward.

## Presumed Contradiction of Verses in the Qur'ân

Allâh said:

"If you fear that you will not be able to deal justly with more than one wife, then marry only one."<sup>[2]</sup>

However, Allâh also said:

"You will never be able to do perfect justice between your wives even if it is your ardent desire."<sup>[3]</sup>

These Verses appear to contradict each other by requiring

[1] Surat Al-Ahzab (33):50.

[2] Surat An-Nisa' (4):3.

[3] Surat An-Nisa' (4):129.



## Our Example

The true example of polygyny for Muslim women to model their role and feelings after is that of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ. There is no greater example for Muslim women than that of the Mothers of the Believers.<sup>[1]</sup>

They were the foremost of the women of this nation in faith and in knowledge. They were at the height of nobility and honor, honesty and patience, modesty and servitude to Allâh and His Messenger ﷺ. And not only were they all of this, but they were so, while living in polygyny.

They were truly remarkable women given that Allâh said of them:

"Allâh wishes only to remove evil deeds and sins from you, O members of the family (of the Prophet), and to purify you with a thorough purification."<sup>[2]</sup>

So who were these women?

Were they jealous like other Muslim women?

What made them succeed in polygyny?

Is their example really attainable?

These questions are very important as their answers provide us with a clear and concise picture of what a Muslim woman

<sup>[1]</sup> An honorary title given to the wives of the Prophet ﷺ based on the Verse: "The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves, and his wives are their mothers." –Surat Al-Ahzab (33):6.

<sup>[2]</sup> Surat Al-Ahzab (33):33.

is capable of in a polygynous marriage.

## The Prophet's Wives

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ had nine wives that outlived him. He actually had a total of thirteen, two of which he did not consummate the marriage with, and two of which died prior to his own death. Those last two are of course, the famous Khadijah bint Khuwailid ؓ, of whom the Prophet ﷺ said:

"The best of the world's women is Mary (at her lifetime), and the best of the world's women is Khadijah (at her lifetime)."<sup>[1]</sup>

And Zainab bint Khuzaimah ؓ, who was known as Ummul-Masakin (the Mother of the Poor), because she was very kind to them. She had previously been married to Abdullah bin Jahsh ؓ who was martyred at Uhud. She died a few months after marrying the Prophet ﷺ.

The other nine began with Saudah bint Zam'ah ؓ. She was the first woman the Prophet ﷺ married after the death of Khadijah ؓ. They married a few days after Khadijah's death in the tenth year of prophethood.<sup>[2]</sup> Saudah ؓ had been previously married to Sakran bin Amr with whom she migrated to Abyssinia and on their way back he died.

She had been one of the early converts to Islam and suffered many hardships for the sake of her *Deen* (religion). She was even the reason that Sakran ؓ had accepted Islam. Saudah

<sup>[1]</sup> Narrated by Ali ؓ and recorded in *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 7, #163.

<sup>[2]</sup> Al-Mubarakpuri, Safiur-Rahman, *Ar-Raheeq Al-Makhtum* (Riyadh: Maktaba Darussalam, 1996), p. 483.